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AUTHOR Starkey, John D.; Caras, Dan
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ABSTRACT

An opinionnaire was constructed by asking approximately 100 students to write down, subjectively, items with which they were most concerned in becoming teachers. Twenty of these were selected as being the most representative of the prospective teacher. This 20-statement opinionnaire was then administered to 417 undergraduate secondary education majors. Scoring was done on a five-point "Likert-type" scale: "5" indicating strongly concerned; "1", strongly unconcerned. Results indicated that students were strongly concerned about various components of educational psychology as it relates to human behavior. Students were also strongly concerned about such nonacademic, humanistic areas as motivation, interests, understanding, meaningful experiences, creativity, learning, self-confidence, discipline, self-realization, and relevancy of materials. It is felt that this study is especially timely for those who are interested in performance criteria and accountability in setting up objectives in teacher preparation. (JB)

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CONCERNS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

John D. Starkey
Professor
Northern Illinois University

Dan Caras
Graduate Student
Northern Illinois University

This article portrays the concerns of pre-service teachers in educational psychology by a portrayal of the thinking of 417 undergraduates at Northern Illinois University who are in their first course in the college of education.

This is especially timely for those who are interested in performance criteria, concern, accountability, relevance, and setting up objectives in teacher preparation.

INTRODUCTION

What are the concerns of students beginning the secondary teacher sequences in our colleges of education?

There are great changes being proposed in teacher education all over the nation, and if this is the hue and cry of the day, then let's take a look at the cognitive and affective considerations of human growth and development, and learning. It is about time that someone should synthesize some hard facts dealing with the relevancy of the material taught in college, and this means all of the subjects and not just those taught to teachers.

This study illustrates the concerns in educational psychology. It is not an attempt to be all-inclusive, but is a try at putting into a semblance of order some of the priorities expressed by a group of juniors and seniors who are beginning the teacher education sequence at Northern Illinois University. These students were enrolled in Human Growth and Development, and Learning which is a six semester hour course in educational psychology.

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This study was made primarily to isolate those concerns which ranked the highest in importance and to ascertain the amount of significance attached to each.

It is essential that we look as deeply as possible into the interests and concerns of students in the areas of understanding, motivation, capacity, remembering, forgetting, learning, discipline, attitudes, socialization, interests, creativity, and those areas in the affective domain which are covered generally but not specifically by academic areas.

If there are areas which may still be of concern to the prospective secondary teacher after he or she has completed 60 or more hours of specific and academic education then what could be more pertinent than taking a look at the occurrence, rank, and evaluation of the level of concerns.

There have really been very few studies specifically on the concerns of students in this area as we have generally allowed the textbook writers in educational psychology to tell us what these concerns should be, and then all study them whether they exist or not. There are reams of material written about each of the subjects, areas, concerns, specific, or whatever they may be called, but in checking as to whether the students really need to know these areas or are even concerned about them, there has been very little research.

This writing is to simply and specifically report a study of the concerns of the students with a 2.15 grade point ave e (on a 4 point scale), junior standing (60 hours) who have just been admitted to the secondary teacher education curriculum, and are in their first education course at Northern Illinois University.

It is especially important to teacher educators because more and more weight is being given to the concerns, opinion, and interests of the students at both the high school and college level.

PROCEDURE

An opinionnaire was constructed by asking approximately 100 students to subjectively write down items with which they are most concerned in becoming teachers. They were asked to write down as many as ten items if possible. This technique could be used by any teacher-educator in any class to get a quick feedback and evaluation of proposed curriculum. From this list, possible concerns were selected according to frequency of occurrence and an attempt was made to include possible areas as well. Twenty statements, almost entirely in the words of the junior and senior students, were selected as being representative of the concerns of the prospective teacher.

This twenty-statement opinionnaire was administered to 417 secondary teacher aspirants as near the beginning of the semester as possible and this occurred in the first three to six meetings of the class. These students were in eighteen separate classes under eighteen separate education faculty members and included all of the beginning secondary education teacher aspirants at Northern Illinois University. The classes average approximately 25 students but there were a few absentees, and a few late enrollees who missed the opinionnaire. No attempt was made to separate males from females, academic disciplines, socio-economic level, race, junior college transferees, or hometown high school. It is a researched fact that 95% of all the students at Northern Illinois University are from Chicago, its suburbs, and the northern one-third of the state of Illinois.

The opinionnaires were scored on a five point Likert-type scale with (5) as strongly concerned, and (1) as strongly unconcerned. It should be understood that the main thrust of this study was to determine the concerns

of the students, how strongly they were concerned, to rank these concerns, and to check the commonalities between the highest ranking concerns.

The mechanical procedure was to have students score this on computer sheets, score on tape, and hence to the computer to run the means, standard deviations, analysis of variance, t-Analysis, and factor analysis.

RESULTS

The important findings in this study are the high concerns shown for the various components of educational psychology as it relates to human behavior. By this process at least nineteen strong concerns are clearly shown by the high means in table I. Several arguments should arise from this study as to the classification of the concerns as they are couched in student terms and some are overlapping, but it is apparent from a quick look at the table compiled from polling these 417 students that two years in academic subjects leaves them strongly concerned about such non-academic and humanistic areas as motivation, interests, understanding, meaningful experiences, creativity, learning, self-confidence, discipline, self-realization, and relevancy of materials.

Familiarity with the technical vocabulary of human behavior is the one item which was ranked by these students toward the unconcerned side.

These concerns are ranked in table I and the means are given for a clear understanding of the importance that some consideration be given to these questions in courses of educational psychology in the preparation of teachers.

TABLE I

Mean Ratings and Preference Rankings For
Concerns in Educational Psychology

MEANS	RANK	CONCERN
4.65	1	To motivate students to do their best
4.39	2	An understanding of how to gain interest and attention of students
4.33	3	To gain insight into human behavior and understanding of students
4.32	4	How to provide meaningful experiences through which pupil growth and learning can be promoted
4.26	5	How to promote creativity
4.24	6	How to teach and how people learn
4.21	7	To gain self confidence to become a good teacher
4.19	8	How to handle discipline problems
4.17	9	How to guide students toward maximum self-realization
4.14	10	Will the materials you teach be useful
4.11	11	How to individualize the learning process
4.09	12	How to deal with students' personal problems
4.06	13	How to evaluate your teaching and the learning of your students
4.01	14	How to aid students in remembering material you teach
3.95	15	To understand how students grow and develop
3.83	16	To overcome shyness and to be able to speak effectively
3.83	17	To be able to better understand and discuss drugs and alcohol in today's schools
3.61	18	To improve my personality
3.50	19	To be able to better understand and discuss sex in today's schools
2.90	20	To become familiar with technical vocabulary of human behavior

A factor analysis showed the first factor to be one of general concern. This could be established by the fact that a sifting process was undertaken at the beginning of the study to eliminate those questions which were of low concern.

TABLE II

Factor I - General Concern

VARIABLE NO.	IDENTITY OF VARIABLE	LOADING
Variable 2	Motivation of students	.79
Variable 8	Insight and understanding	.78
Variable 15	Teaching and learning	.78
Variable 17	Meaningful experiences	.78
Variable 4	Gaining interest & attention	.76
Variable 18	Evaluation	.75
Variable 9	Growth and development	.73
Variable 14	Students' personal problems	.72
Variable 12	Promoting creativity	.71
Variable 19	Relevance	.71
Variable 16	Individualization	.71
Variable 5	Guiding toward self-realization	.70
Variable 3	Gaining self-confidence	.69
Variable 20	Aid students in remembering	.69
Variable 1	Discipline problems	.68
Variable 7	Discuss drugs and alcohol	.65
Variable 6	Discuss sex in school setting	.63
Variable 13	Personality improvement	.60
Variable 11	Overcome shyness & effective speaking	.57
Variable 10	Technical vocabulary	.55

Perhaps one of the major findings of this study is the general concerns factor and the loading of this particular factor. It is very apparent that these have some correlation and that the 417 students are highly concerned about these aspects of educational psychology which should be taught, discussed, and included in courses for teacher candidates.

TABLE III

Factor II - Concentrating on the Student

VARIABLE	IDENTITY OF VARIABLE	LOADING
Variable 17	Meaningful experiences	.33
Variable 5	Guiding toward self-realization	.33
Variable 16	Individualization	.31
Variable 12	Promoting creativity	.31
Variable 13	Improving personality	-.40
Variable 10	Technical vocabulary	-.36
Variable 11	Overcoming shyness & effective speaking	-.33
Variable 20	Aiding students in remembering	-.31

This is an interesting factor which seems to indicate that these people are concentrating on the student. The negative loadings might indicate a lower concern for the variables which mainly deal with self. These teacher candidates may feel they have solved these personal problems and are concentrating on the students whom they are going to teach.

TABLE IV

Factor III - Problems of the Student

VARIABLE	IDENTITY OF VARIABLE	LOADING
Variable 6	Discuss sex in school setting	.55

Variable 7	Discuss drugs and alcohol	.47
Variable 11	Overcoming shyness & effective speaking	-.46
Variable 3	Gaining self-confidence	-.33

This factor would seem to indicate students who feel that they have self-confidence, and have overcome shyness and are able to speak effectively. They are then highly concerned in being able to discuss, teach, and aid in the problems sex, alcohol, and drugs in the schools. Several speculations could be made concerning the possible usefulness of these students as teachers. Whether they would be effective is not researched here, but they are not as highly concerned about their own ability as they are about being able to discuss the problems of alcohol, drugs, and sex.

TABLE V

Factor IV - Techniques of Teaching

VARIABLE	IDENTITY OF VARIABLE	LOADING
Variable 10	Technical vocabulary	.45
Variable 20	Aid students in remembering	.30
Variable 3	Gaining self-confidence	-.32

This factor shows some who are not as highly concerned about self-confidence as they are in the technical vocabulary and aiding students in remembering. It seems these could be catagorized as those who are concerned about the teaching techniques.

TABLE VI

Factor V - The Growth Factor

VARIABLE	IDENTITY OF VARIABLE	LOADING
Variable 9	Understanding how students grow and develop	.35

Variable 13 Personality improvement .32

This factor would seem to indicate a high concern for growth and improvement in both students and self.

SUMMARY

The beginning secondary teaching candidate is strongly concerned about how to motivate students to do their best. The factor analysis showing Factor I to be General Concern demonstrates this.

The student is strongly concerned about an understanding of how to gain interest and attention of students, to gain insight into behavior, to provide meaningful experiences, to promote creativity and teaching and learning. Factor II, Concentration on the Student, indicates the concerns which show the strength of these feelings.

The beginning secondary student teacher candidate is concerned about the Problems of the Student in Factor III. The mean ratings of the questions on discipline, guiding students toward self-realization, evaluation, students' personal problems strongly indicate this, as well as the ability to discuss sex, drugs, and alcohol with the students.

The students are concerned about the Techniques of Teaching but perhaps not to the extent of some other facets in the affective domain. The means show undecided to concerned but more tendency toward concern of such items as aiding students to remember, how students grow and develop, and the technical vocabulary of human development.

The Growth Factor is also a concern in that many students indicated a high concern for growth of self and student. This desire is present in this group of students.

Finally, some speculation and some caution. Our universities face a

challenge in the preparation of teachers in the affective domain. The students are concerned, but are we meeting these demands? This factor analysis should be run over and over in many sections of the United States. Post-testing should be done to see if these concerns are being discussed, researched, and dealt with in our colleges of education. The concerns are here, and so are we. Are we meeting the challenge?